

Workshop 3: Local Action as an integral support mechanism for strategic invasive species management.

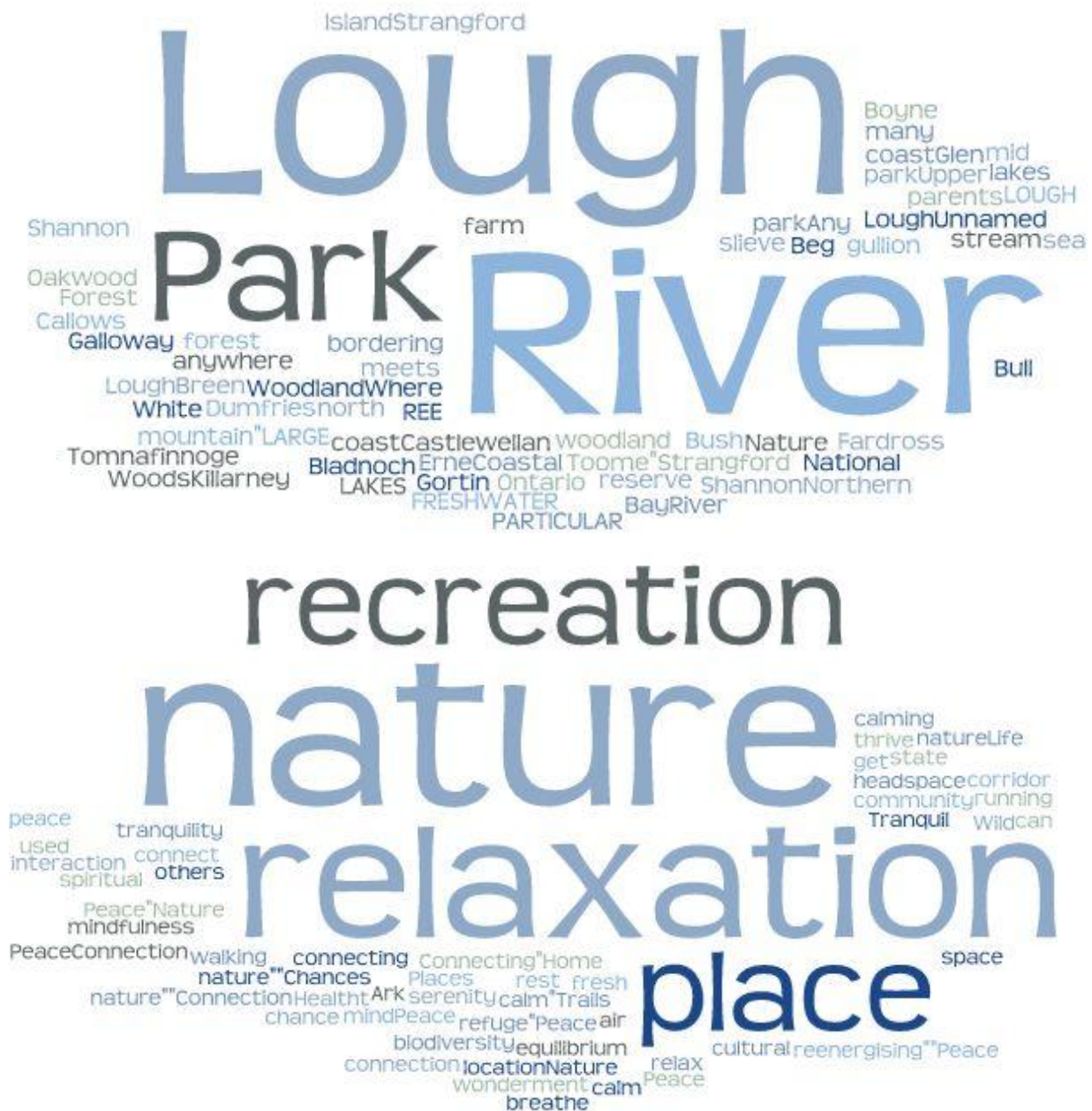
Chair: Eammon Horgan; **Rapporteur:** Chantel Carr

Objective- to gain insight and recommendations to establishing Local Action Group's (LAG'S) to manage invasive species.

Engaging opening task:

All participants to answer these two questions with just a word or two.

- I. What is your favourite blue/green space?
- II. What do blue/green spaces mean to you?



Open discussion of LAG'S:

During this discussion the whole group mentioned some successful action taken against invasive species, across all levels including project based and LAG's. Ideas on establishing LAG's across the island of Ireland

- Ready-made volunteer centres which could be accessed through County Council Biodiversity Officers.
- Clean Coasts have over 200 registered groups and recently had a great event to remove Sea Buckthorn from Bull Island, Dublin. Another avenue to access volunteers.
- Connemara Restoration project focused on rhododendron removal this was replicated in North West Mayo due to the success and outcomes as the staff became local ambassadors. It helped address barrier of the need for accreditation and local skill development.
- Red Squirrel Conservation in Northern Ireland initially was project run but now volunteer based. The volunteers have been instrumental in grey squirrel eradication. LANTRA courses were provided for those involved and they helped to establish new groups, running a yearly forum to help spread information sharing.
- A project in Northern Ireland helped by producing the enforcement orders and helping Angling Groups to get funding. They trained volunteers and got involved with the on the ground work. Including mapping out invasives on the River Ban using a drone.
- Many attendees mentioned about the need to work at a landscape scale and for people to know where they fit in with the bigger picture!

Workshop discussion topics:

1. What should be the target species for LAG's to manage?

- Invasive species that communities could target need to be accessible, cheap, non-hazardous and perhaps look into those species that have uses. Needs to be more long-term thinking when it comes to management and having uses for the invasive species could overcome this barrier.
 - Cherry laurel: use as biofuel, this also overcomes the barrier of needing a licence for removal as the wood is a bi product for the biofuel.
 - Sea buckthorn: is a superfood and could be foraged. Easily accessible and non-hazardous, do not need a licence to remove,
 - Himalayan Balsam: cheap, accessible, non, hazardous and easy to remove,
 - Rosa Rugosa: a good potential campaign for garden centres as primarily sold as a ornamental plant.
 - Pacific salmon: could be a species for the angling community specifically to target due to their expertise and presence on the water.
 - Giant hogweed: much of the public see this plant regularly and want to take action, although they need a licence and the plant is hazardous, perhaps the public could get involved with mapping the spread.

- Other species include: Nuttall's water weed, floating pennywort, mink, grey squirrels, skunk cabbage and giant rhubarb.

2. What are the legislative or regulatory considerations for LAG'S?

- Appropriate Assessments are required for invasive species removal, however to overcome this barrier, if the LAG is working on a designated site the AA is not required.
- Lack of baseline data, more focus on mapping and access to data is a challenge when some agencies nervous to share data or data is private.
- Herbicide use needs a trained person and a licence.
- Disposal over waste plant material requires contacting NPWS to complete a form. Confusion on the most appropriate way to dispose of an invasive plant as no clear guidance.
- Landowners do not often accept legal responsibility to control or manage an invasive on their land and there is difficulty to enforce.
- Councils may only be able to work within their boundary and are restricted and it restricts the landscape level approach, which is desired.
- Need more accessible and published knowledge of legislation and best practise.
- Not enough reliable and knowledgeable contractors.

3. What are the considerations for funding opportunities for LAG's?

- Funding to be sustained long-term (not just for a five year cycle for example) and more concentration on legacy funding. For invasives removal and biosecurity is important but monitoring is also required and funding should cover this aspect.
- Having a specific staff member/person responsible for applying for funding and finding funding opportunities, requires a skilled person.
- Option to use collaborative local pots of money for national level projects.
- Issue of greenwashing.

4. What should LAG's consider with landowner permissions?

- Need to shift towards more of a landscape scale approach by working with neighbours to ensure we move away from working in silos and collaborate. Invasive species do not care for boundaries and jurisdictions.
- For successful landowner relations there needs to be trust, consistency, good communication by keeping them updated and to offer training opportunities or event attendance.
- Insurance and health & safety.
- Other considerations: GDPR, biosecurity, other users in public spaces, reputation of the land owners.

